
Local Government Committee

HB 1505

Brief Description: Changing provision relating to comprehensive plan amendments initiated by local government.

Sponsors: Representatives Moeller, Wallace, Dunn and Curtis.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands the list of exceptions to the general rule requiring that a GMA comprehensive plan be amended no more than once per year, thus allowing additional amendments regarding: 1) the adoption of a "planned action ordinance"; 2) the annexation of unincorporated areas located within an urban growth boundary; and 3) provisions for the creation of fifty or more jobs within an urban growth boundary and which provide employee compensation greater than the regional median household income.

Hearing Date: 2/23/05

Staff: Thamas Osborn (786-7129).

Background:

Growth Management Act.

Enacted in 1990 and 1991, the Growth Management Act (GMA) establishes a comprehensive land use planning framework for county and city governments in Washington. The GMA specifies numerous provisions for jurisdictions fully planning under the Act (GMA jurisdictions) and establishes a reduced number of compliance requirements for all local governments.

GMA jurisdictions must adopt internally consistent comprehensive land use plans (comprehensive plans), which are generalized, coordinated land use policy statements of the governing body. Comprehensive plans must satisfy requirements for specified "elements," each of which is a planning subset of a comprehensive plan. GMA jurisdictions also must adopt development regulations that are consistent with and implement the comprehensive plan.

Comprehensive plans and development regulations are subject to continuing review and evaluation by the adopting county or city. GMA jurisdictions must review and, if needed, revise their comprehensive plans and development regulations according to a cyclical seven-year statutory schedule. Jurisdictions that are not fully planning under the GMA must satisfy requirements pertaining to critical areas and natural resource lands according to this same schedule.

Except as otherwise provided in the GMA, comprehensive plan amendments may be considered by the governing body of the city or county no more frequently than once per year. The GMA provides for three exceptions, including amendments regarding:

- initial adoption of a subarea plan that does not modify the comprehensive plan policies and designations applicable to the subarea;
- adoption or amendment of a shoreline master program; and
- amendment of the capital facilities element of a comprehensive plan that occurs concurrently with the adoption or amendment of a county or city budget.

"Planned Action Ordinances" Under the State Environmental Policy Act.

A "planned action" is a special category of development project that is defined and regulated under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), and the related provisions in the Washington Administrative Code that implement the SEPA. A project that meets the requisite legal criteria for designation as a "planned action" under SEPA is subject to a simplified review process, and approval is conditioned on the satisfaction of less stringent criteria than are other projects. To be designated as a planned action, a project must:

- be designated as a planned action by an *ordinance* adopted by a GMA county or city;
- have had significant environmental impacts adequately addressed in an existing environmental impact statement that is part of a GMA plan;
- be directly related to projects that have already been subject to the SEPA review and the GMA planning process;
- be located in an urban growth area or are located within a master planned resort;
- not be "essential public facilities" as defined under the GMA; and
- be consistent with the pertinent GMA comprehensive plan.

In addition to the criteria listed above, a city or county planning under the GMA must limit planned actions to certain types of development or to specific geographic areas that are less extensive than the jurisdictional boundaries of the GMA county or city.

Summary of Bill:

Expands the list of exceptions to the general rule requiring that a GMA comprehensive plan be amended no more than once per year. The act creates three additional exceptions allowing amendments pertaining to the following subject matter:

1. the adoption of a "planned action ordinance";
2. the annexation of unincorporated areas located within an urban growth boundary; and
3. an amendment necessary to provide for the creation of fifty or more jobs within an urban growth boundary and which provide employee compensation greater than the regional median household income.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.